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ABSTRACT

This primer supplies systematic basic phonics material for learning how to read, to be put into the hands of children. The primer includes instructions for the teacher, but it assumes that the user also has read either the book, "How the Alphabet Works," or the matching pamphlet, "Systematic Basic Phonics," which is included in the back of the primer. (RS)

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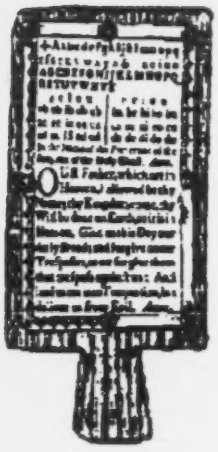
PHONIC PRIMER
for
HOW THE ALPHABET WORKS

Based on the 15th Century Hornbook



SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

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Phonic Primer

How the Alphabet Works

A Handbook for Teaching Someone to Read

SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n .
p q r s t . v w x y/y z

a e i o u		a e i o u
ab eb ib ob ub		ba be bi bo bu
ac ec ic oc uc		ca *ce* *ci* co cu
ad ed id od ud		da de di do du

sh th ch wh ph qu -ng

er	ar	ow	aw	oo	oy	ti
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ur						si

A HORNBOOK FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Based on the 15th Century Hornbook

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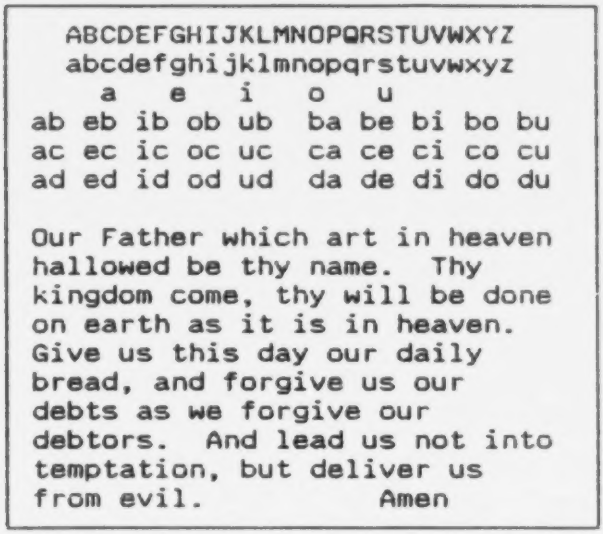
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
a e i o u
ab eb ib ob ub ba be bi bo bu
ac ec ic oc uc ca ce ci co cu
ad ed id od ud da de di do du
Our Father which art in heaven
hallowed be thy name. Thy
kingdom come, thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread, and forgive us our
debts as we forgive our
debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us
from evil. Amen

This is the face of a hornbook. A single sheet of paper was fastened to a wooden paddle and covered with a protective sheet or varnish to guard it from finger marks. Paper was costly long ago.
For hundreds of years these little hornbooks taught people how to read. Shakespeare learned how to read by using a hornbook. So did George Washington. Hornbooks were part of the cargo in those tiny ships that brought the first settlers to America. Hornbooks traveled in the covered wagons that carried literacy to our western shores. Hornbooks disappeared only when paper became more affordable.

The face of a hornbook contained:

1) Two alphabets (to show how the letters look), with vowels separated out;
2) A syllabary (each syllable to be turned into a word by adding one more consonant and "sounding out");
3) A familiar prayer, already memorized, to recite and "read" aloud, watching the letters do their work.

A great many people, for hundreds of years, learned how to read by using a hornbook.

Users of How the Alphabet Works have asked for a Primer to supply material to be put into the hands of the children. This Primer includes instructions for the teacher, but it assumes that the user also has read either the book How the Alphabet Works, or the matching pamphlet "Systematic Basic Phonics" which is included in the back of this Primer.

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Related materials:

Word Mastery by Florence Akin [from Educators Publishing, 75 Moulton Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138]
A small book, fully indexed, of words for phonics and instructions for classoom teaching. $5. Very useful.

Phonovisual Products, Inc. [12216 Parklawn Drive, Rockville, Maryland 20852] offers a pair of excellent phonic charts. Request a free brochure.

"Commissurotomy of the Corpus Callosum and the Remedial Reader" by Elaine Albert, 1990. [Available on ERIC, Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, microfiche # ED 325 816 at university libraries.] Examines the physiological effects on brain structure of reading instruction via right brain before age 9.
How the Alphabet Works is also available on ERIC microfiche # ED 324 661

Additional bibliography in How the Alphabet Works.

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Preface

This is not "reading".
This is learning How to Read.
It comes before reading begins.

This is not a "word recognition" program.
This is a Word Building program,-- information and exercises about how the spoken word is encoded in alphabetic writing. There is pencil work to do.

There are no vocabulary lists here, nor any limitation about what words fit what grade level. After a few weeks or months of practice, the learner can acquire the skill to read all the favorite books of childhood in their original.

A word of caution about testing: When systematic phonics instruction has been pursued from September to Christmas and its children take the usual standardized tests, other children trained in the whole word methods may do better on those first tests than the phonics-taught children,-- at that first testing. Standardized tests are written to match the whole-word methods, for fast recognition of a very small vocabulary. Phonics shows the child how to sound all the words he can use in speaking, not just a graded list. His sounding-out begins very slowly, but by spring of that same year, phonics-taught children have outstripped the look-sayers on all tests.

The Whole-language advocates insist on the child's "reading for meaning" right from the first. The phonics teacher will be reading aloud to her children all manner of children's literature. Together, teacher and children will be memorizing favorite poetry for choral reading. Thus the good teacher brings an abundance of meaning into her classroom while the children are preparing to gather meaning on their own,-- all the riches of the whole world of literature.

Note: If basal readers are already in use, this HOW Primer can be used in addition, as a separate part of each day's instruction, to let the children see how words are made.

Some Peculiar Instructions

1. This is not "reading for meaning". This is Decoding. Don't look for meaning. Just practice sounding-out for a while. Literature must wait a bit while we figure out how it was written by using an alphabet.

2. Our alphabet was developed for writing Latin, not English. We have to make-do with only 26 lettters whereas English needs 44 letters. Even one more letter, the schwa, would be a big help, especially in spelling. But instead of inventing new letters, English has patched up by using the old ones in pairs to make /th/, /oi/ /sh/, and the rest. We grumble but we do manage to write and read with an alphabet that is more than 3,000 years old, an alphabet originally invented, long before Latin, for languages quite different from ours. An alphabet now known and used all over the world for many languages, each with its own adaptations.

3. Therefore-- it takes a bit of flexibility to read English. "Sounding-out" produces an approximation of a word. Putting the words into sentences provides the speech. The reader reads aloud and notices: "That doesn't sound quite right." So he reads it aloud again, adjusting his pronunciation to fit normal speech. For example: "is" really sounds like /iz/ and "of" sounds like /uv/.

4. There are no pictures here. This is Decoding-- "sounding-out"-- converting alphabetic writing into speech. No guessing from pictures. Just listening for the sounds of normal speech. It can be fun, like solving a puzzle. It has happened that some children have found it so much fun that they went on to invent their own secret alphabets for writing notes to their friends which the confiscating teacher cannot read.

5. And if these beginning sentences seem unexciting, remember: they open the way to reading Shakespeare and all the rest.

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Let's go!

An Old-Fashioned Idea: The Copy Book

If you provide the learner with a notebook instead of using loose pages for writing his sandwich words, etc., he produces a record where he can see his own progress. The bound notebook offers the appeal to permanence.

1. Date each page: this will be interesting later.

2. If the learner makes a mistake. ignore it. All those red marks made against misspelled words call attention to the wrong form! Instead, try using a star or mark for all *CORRECT* words, to draw attention to the good ones to be stored in memory. Praise success.

2b. If you do this, you may discover that the learner, wanting more stars, may look closely to see **why** there is no star and how to fix it.

2c. Use an eraser for mistakes. Don't let them stay in view. Remember: ***testing is not teaching***. This book is a teaching program. There should be *no interest in test scores during learning*.

Of course beginners make mistakes! It all starts with what we don't know. The corrections make the learning.

3. In the notebook, the learner can copy a sentence. Then change a word and make a different sentence. Or, write a new sentence using other words already on the page.

4. From time to time the teacher may write a clear model for the learner to copy,-- either manuscript or cursive.

5. Now and then the learner may use a page in his notebook to copy carefully a very short poem (or a joke, or a seasonal greeting, or even an old-fashioned motto.)

Politeness is to do and say
The kindest thing in the kindest way.

Never promise more than you can perform.

Early to bed and early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M N O P

Q R S T U V

W X Y Z

a b c d e f g

h i j k l m n o p

q r s t u v

w x y z

A a B b C c D d E e F f G g

H h J j K k L l M m N n O o P p

Q q R r S s T t U u V v

W w X x Y y Z z

Hear the Letters?

First: the consonants

If you say the name of each letter out loud, you can hear at least a hint of how it will sound in reading,-- except for H and W. Start with the consonants:

. B C D . F G H . J K L M N . P

Q R S T . V W X Y Z

Here's a puzzle for you. In an ABC book for small children, you be an inspector. Did the maker of the book play fair?

Did the ABC book try to tell you that X is for xylophone? Well, sure, it is spelled that way, but it sounds like zylophone. No fair! X is for X-ray.

Did the ABC book try to tell you that T is for thimble? or S is for shoe? No fair! Not all ABC books play fair. That's because people often get more interested in spelling and forget that beginners need to learn first how the alphabet works for writing and reading human speech.

Some letters can have two different sounds. The letter -C- can sound like an /s/ or like a /k/. The letter -G- sounds all right for "giant" but it also works for "goat". This makes for some confusion. For a start, use the -C- as a /k/ sound and the -G- as in goat. More about this later.

The letter -Y- gets complicated too. It begins the word "yes" and it ends the word "baby". Remember: we are trying to get along on an alphabet that has only 26 letters when English needs 44 letters. So we have had to invent.

But mostly they work pretty well. Sound them out:

. B C D . F G H . J K L M N . P

Q R S T . V W X Y Z

Try not to make any little grunts, like "buh" or "tuh".
Try to get just the consonant sound all by itself.

Next: the short vowels

We've left out vowels from our alphabet! A E I O U. Each one can sound like its name. But mostly they are used for something else,-- the short vowel sounds. More than anything else the vowels are used for "short vowel" sounds. Hear them. Say them out loud. Like this:

a e i o u

/a/ at and after grab ham Andy apple Annie

/e/ egg end enter get Eddie elephant Edna

/i/ is it if into him Isabel igloo Izzy

/o/ on onto got hop Oswald opposite Oscar

/u/ up under gum Uncle Gus hum ugly

These short vowels may be the hardest part of learning how to read. Why start with them? Why not leave them till later? Because these short vowels are used in two-thirds of all English syllables, learning them first will speed you on your way . So *listen* to them. *Say* them to yourself. *Practice* till they come easy: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/. Write them on a slip of paper with a little sketch to remind you and post it on the refrigerator so you can say them every time you go by.

apple

elephant

Indian

ox

umbrella

Sounds only: a e i o u

. B C B . F G H . J
K L M N . P
Q R S T . V W X Y Z

b...box c...cat d...dig f...fun

g...gum h...hat j...jam k...kid

l...lemon m...mug n...nut p...pan

q...quit r...rag s...sun t...top

v...van w...wig... x-ray

y...yell z...zoo

---

a ... e ... i ... o ...u

apple elephant igloo ox umbrella

Hear them? Say them!

-a- at and after Annie ham

-e- end enter get Eddie

-i- it in if give Izzy him

-o- on ox onto hop got

-u- up under gun hug uncle

ba be bi bo bu

bag beg big box bum

ma me mi mo mu

man men mit mop mud

pa pe pi po po

pan pen pin pop pug

ha he hi ho hu

ham hem him hop hug

ta te ti to tu

tag ten tip top tun

fa lo nu re ru

ga gu di la li

va zi ve we ye

su si wi nu na

Cat bit rat.

Rat ran.

Tom hit Gus.

Gus is mad.

Ed got wet.

Did Gus hit Ed?

Did Gus get wet?

Pat is at bat.

Dan ran.

Ed did not tag Dan.

Did Pat tag Ed?

Did Gus run?

Did Pat tag him?

Ann got at bat.

But Ann did not run.

Pat had fun. Ann did not.

Some words do not sound out well: a the. We need the schwa for these. Pronounce them as in normal speech: "a cat", "the dog." They sound like /u/ /thu/. We use them a lot!

Ed got a job.

Tom got on the bus.

Gus fell in the mud.

Jim had a pet fox.

Meg has a zip-up bag.

A fat man had a nap on the bus.

The dog got in the mud.

Did the dog get wet? Yes.

The dog sat on the map.

The map got wet. End of the map.

Let Dan pet a fat pig.

The pig got in the mud.

Is Dan as wet as the pig?

Contrast

Why teach all five short vowels at once? Isn't that too difficult? Much of the learning in this Primer is based on Contrast. As in art, things are made Visible by being in Contrast with something else. The differences between the sounds of /a/ and /e/ and /i/ and /o/ and /u/ are very small. It takes an attentive ear to hear them. The younger the child, the sharper the ear, the easier he learns language. Consider how, in his babbling stage, the infant practiced all the sounds of human speech and then learned to imitate the language of the people he heard. By age five this early language skill is already fading. Presenting all five short vowels together invites early attention to those small differences:

pan pen pin pot puff

The learner can watch the instructor's mouth while listening for the sounds,-- /aaa/ wide open; /e/ not quite so wide; /i/ nearly closed. Then /o/ and /u/ slide down in the back of the mouth. The adult instructor will have to struggle with these sounds far more than the young child! But the learner needs a clear model. Contrast examples:

at....extra....in....on....up

ant....egg....ink....oblong....ugly

spell....spill sell....sill

rabbit ...hen...pig...fox...duck

In the same manner, the beginner can learn the difference between the lower case letters "b" and "d".-- by looking at both of them together, to discover the Contrast. Observe: if you put the top bump on "b" and then on "d", it is easy to see which is which!

bib did

Immediate contrast helps to make things show.

How do you like to go up in a swing?
Up in the air so blue.
Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do.

Up in the air and over the wall
Till I can see so wide
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside

Then I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roofs so brown.
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down.

--Robert Louis Stevenson

A dog can dig.

A pig has a pen.

Tom has a red hat.

The cat got a rat.

Jim had a pet red fox.

Jim got his fox in a big net.

Ed has a job.

His kid did not get a job.

Tom got on the bus.

Max sat on a wet log.

Gus fell in a tub.

The tub had mud in it.

We can push another consonant into the sandwich words and get some new words:

Did Ed drop his basket?

Did Fred grab a hot pan?

Stan got a big drum from his Dad.

Liz fed the pig a scrap.

Dad got a big crop. Dad brags.

Did Sis scrub up the mud

Stan has a big red sled.

Jim sat on the sled and hit a snag.

Can Dad mend the sled?

Tom has a flag.

The flag flaps in the wind.

Al is at camp.

Sam can swim but Ted cannot.

Let's stop and rest a bit.

Let's get a glass of milk.

Digraphs: th, she, ch, wh

There are only 26 letters in our alphabet. We need enough for the 44 sounds we speak. Therefore, we've paired up some of the letters to make the extra sounds. These are called "digraphs" -- "di" means two. A good ABC book ought to include:

TH is for thimble
CH is for church
SH is for sheep
WH is for wham!

Now we can make more sandwich words:

th... this path thug thin

ch... chop chin rich such

sh... ship shop fish wish

wh... whack when whiz whiff

itch dash shed ash

that thick with them

chick much chap chip

Get a whiff of that fish shop!

This shop has thick chops and thin chips.

Let's dash to that shed when we finish this job.

The king had a big ship.

Phil can chat with the king.

This egg had a chick in it.

Ed has a big chin.

Bess is thin, but Hank is fat.

Dad has a lock shop.

Chuck can chin himself.

Did Josh catch a fish?

Ben picked up a thick shell.

That shell had a chip in it.

The bathmat is wet.

Did Ella wish to get a check?

Did Ella get rich?

A duck will quack, not but sing.

Did Mom smash that dish?

Alas, Mom cannot patch the dish.

A fat man had a nap on a bus. At the bus stop the fat man did not get off. The bus went on. The fat man missed his stop.

Josh did not stop on red. Did the cop get him? Yes, Josh got a ticket.

Hank has a big red sled. Hank slid on the hill with his sled. The sled hit a bump. Hank fell off. Hank got wet. The sled is O.K.

Tom can swim. Liz can swim. A duck can swim well! Can a hen swim? That's dumb! I can swim. I swam at camp.

Ellen has a big bag. It can zip up. Ellen had a pen in that bag. That pen spilled ink in Ellen's bag and left a black spot.

Fred has a hat and Bob has a cap. Fred dropped his hat in the mud. Then Fred grabbed Bob's cap. Bob did not hit Fred, but Bob did get his cap back.

Tom has a drum. Tom got his drum from his Dad. It is not a big drum. Tom taps his drum. It goes Tap-tap-rat-a-tap-tap. Rub-a dub-dub. Tom grins.

Bob has a popgun. It can snap. Bob hit a hog with his popgun. The hog jumped, but the popgun did not cut the hog's skin. Bob hit a tin can with his popgun. The tin can went "zing!" and fell.

Jack can fish at his camp. Jack can drop the fish in his basket. Will the fish flap and tip the basket?

Did Ann smash that glass?
Ann must pick up the bits
of glass and drop them in
the junk bin. Did Ann spill
bits of glass in the grass?
Pick them up, Ann!

Can Bill lift that log?
It's a big thick log. Will
Bill drop it with a smash?
Bill will chop it up and
then lift it.

OH, the grand old Duke of York,
He had ten-thousand men.
He marched them up to the
    top of the hill
And marched them down again.

When they were up they were up.
And when they were down they
    were down.
And when they were only half
    way up
They were neither up nor down.

Og is a rock.
He sits in the sun.
He gets hot. He gets wet.
He just sits.
Og can not swim, flip, hop, belch,
or dig, kiss, stink, limp, or wink.
Og is a rock.
Og can not fuss nor kick nor spit.
Og cannot yell nor sing.
Og cannot spell yes or if or not.
Og just cannot spell a thing.
Is Og sad at that? Not!
Og cannot hug. He cannot grin.
Og cannot get up. Og just sits.

Is Og dull?
No, Og is a rock. That's that.

Rip and snip. Tip and drip.

Let's be disgusting1

Tip the milk. Drip the jam.

Rip the pants. Snip the mittens

Let's be disgusting!.

Kick the dentist.

Hit the cat.

Yell at Grandma.

Drop the dustpan.

Drop the glass.

Smash the cup

Slam the dishes.

Bang the blocks.

Step in the mud.

Let's be disgusting!

For use after Part Five
--short vowels + consonant digraphs + "blends" + adding the -le and -ing endings

Things on the kitchen shelves:
Big pans and little pans.
Lots of kettles with handles.
A big bottle of ketchup.
A little box of matches.
A glass jar of salad dressing.
Ten candles in a box.
A fat jar of pickles.
A dozen cups.
Twelve canning jars.
A packet of string.
Six spring clips.
On the table a basket of
apples, bananas, and lemons.
And a dish cloth in the sink.
Things in the kitchen.

trumpet pumpkin hundred

difficult invent rubbish

rocket cobweb Columbus

helicopter blast-off level

fishpond chipmunk project

expect gravity astonish

exactly sandwich contradict

pickle sunset jacket

Is a hippopotamus in the bathtub?

The dragon expected to get a gumdrop but he got a scrambled egg. Did it upset the dragon when he did not get his wish?

The bandit astonished us with his racket when his umbrella hit the electric bulb.

Left-to-right makes a difference!

Here are some close pairs. Copy each word. Sound out each word, left-to-right, just as you wrote it. Use a fescue or a fescue-card. Hear the words. Notice the change in meanings from left-to-right!

stop...spot...pots...post

left...felt tip...pit

pan...nap top...pot

on...no brag...grab

from...form blot...bolt

net...ten lump...plum

was...saw

shell...shelf swell...smell

stick...sick...slick

trick...track...truck..trunk..tank

Here are some non-words. Turn each into a good word by changing only its vowel. Read your results out loud.

sund paff fazz wutch panch cump

salf drup wush thamp malk skun

trock drup twast snotch stract scrop

crosh bruck scrop skall rosk crasp

plin spall slem scrutch whuch chust

tham shap screb thuck jimp kuck

Y can act likc a vowcl:

by my why spy trying crying

candy empty sixty dusty twenty

play day say clay pay way gray

Add a Y: what do you get?

part short smart wind fluff soft

craft hand sand left pick froth

20 Bad Boys Who Are Very Useful

a	said	are	you
the	have	was	they
to	come	were	who
where	do	one	what
there	does	two	of

They refuse to sound-out properly, but we need them. In fact, they work hard and show up often. So get acquainted with them.

Here's what they'd look like if they were sensible:

u	sed	ar	yoo
thu	hav	wuz	thay
too	cum	wer	whoo
whair	doo	wun	whot
thair	duz	too	uv

Words like these are sometimes called "sight words". You are supposed to learn them by just looking at them,-- although if you look carefully you'll find that each one gives you at least some phonic clue about how to sound it out. What happens is that these words work so hard and show up so often that you soon get used to them. Maybe it's as if they've been used so much that they've got sort of worn out?

As you may have noticed, it is the vowels that most often get screwed up. That's because English pronunciation changes as the years go by. You can observe this when you meet someone from a different part of the country: his vowels sound queer to you. But then– your vowels sound queer to him. It helps if a beginner learns how to read from a local teacher who uses vowels the same as the learner does.

Try this: Print each word on a slip of paper. When the learner can recognize a word, he can tear off one corner of the paper. Second time another corner, and so on,-- on different days. On the fifth success the learner can tear the slip in half.

a said are you

the have was they

to come were who

where do one what

there does two of

Since our alphabet does not have enough vowels for the way we actually talk, we use some pairs of letters to make more vowels sounds. In each pair of words here the first vowel "says its name". The second vowel is just a pusher. Copy these in your notebook. READ ALOUD.

ee.. sweet teeth three feel

ea.. team beach clean leave

oa.. road soap toast boat

ai.. mail wait tail paint

ay.. pay day play say

ie.. pie tied tried cried

Copy the following words. Read aloud. Tell why each vowel has a long or a short sound.

daytime left leaf raindrop grip

oatmeal meatloaf mailman tieclip

tealeaf green stinkbomb drumbeat

wire swept smokestack lockup

The long vowel sounds like the name of the vowel. If we add an E to the sandwich word, the E is silent, but it pushes the first vowel to make it "say its name." Copy each pair into your notebook. Then add an E at the end of one word in each pair. (The first pair is done for you.) READ ALOUD.

at...ate mad...mad us...us

hid...hid bit...bit hop...hop

tub...tub cut...cut dim...dim

tc

slop...slop scrap...scrap

In the following words, remove the final E and replace it with *ed* or *er* or *ing*. Read aloud.

hide joke hope

scrape trade

time rake close

cure bite safe

vote wave wide

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.

If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

The second vowel serves as a pusher to make the first vowel say its name. This effect will go through one consonant, but if there are two consonants in between, the second consonant can act like a screen door and stop the pusher effect. Copy each word as you sound it out. Which vowels are short, which are long? Why? (This can help with spelling too. Even though this rule sometimes doesn't work, it is still worth knowing.)

dinner...diner supper...super hopping...hoping

later...ladder holly...holy skidding...sliding

licked...liked slopped...sloped filling...filing

backed...baked kite...kitten traded...trapped

hero music lifted zero smiling

pumpkin dustpan pilgrim camping

pupil picnic rabbit locked hammer

The kitten liked the cream and licked it so fast

that she slopped it over the side of the plate.

The other team hoped to make us so hopping mad

that we lost the game.

Joe will ask to use that ladder later, after

he has eaten this super supper.

Three witches met on a dock.
The fat witch had a tiny shovel.
The thin witch wore thick glasses.
The biggest witch had a plastic teacup in a bag.
What they needed was a boat to get them across
to where they planned to have a meeting.
"What can we do with these things?" they asked.
The shovel did not float.
With the glasses they did see across.
But even if the teacup did float, no one
can ride in a teacup! The bag was useless.
What were they to do?

The fat witch swore and banged on the dock
with the shovel.
The thin witched yelled and smashed the glasses.
The biggest witch sat on the dock and
cried big wet tears.
Then they went back home and sulked
till Halloween.
Who's afraid of such a big dumb witch?
Stupid witches!

ar or er-ir-ur

/ar/ park dark star far spark yarn

/or/ short fork storm horse morning born

/er/ her jerk winter finger fisherman
flutter dishwasher tanker

/ir/ dirt shirt skirt bird girl third

/ur/ turn hurt burn curl

Say them. Hear each vowel sound:

far... for...fur star...stir farther...further
buster firmer burner curler

corner farmer order harder fisherman

The letter /e/ can do two things in the same word. Here it is part of the /er/ sound. At the same time it serves as the pusher for the long vowel ahead of it:

baker joker trader driver paper

The letter R affects the vowel in front of it. Here are some non-words. Change each into a real word by changing its vowel. Read your results out loud.

ar or er-ir-ur

jark dort thard shirp ter pirk

cor furm yerd bork mirch hird

starm cirk shart curn nirth hurm

firk ur tharn

Here are samples that all sound alike, but only one in each group is spelled correctly. These are a nuisance! How can you find out which one is spelled correctly ? If you write the good one a few times it may help you remember.

bird..burd..berd hir..her..hur

thersty..thursty..thirsty shirt..shurt..shert

durt..dert..dirt gerl..gurl..girl

(Of course anyone who knows phonics can say them them all aloud without difficulty!)

-oi oy

oil boy point join spoil noisy joyful

The pirates boiled the monster in oil.

The monster had spoiled the coins they had.

It was a noisy affair.

Roy is a boy who is enjoying his boyhood.

Complete each of these into a real word by adding either oi or oy. The oi does not usually come at the end of a word.

---l sp---l enj--- t--- n---se p---nt

c---n j--- enj--- j---ful sp---l

oo oo

Divide these words into two columns,- those which sound like /foot/ and those which sound like /food/:

cool cook goose good fishhook soon

boom pool took crook room shook

oo and oo

We keep a goose in a cool coop.

Poor goose cannot choose what food she will get.

Does she think we have a good cook book?

Cooking in the woods took a long time because the woodpile was too little.

Childhood is not understood by every expert who looks at us.

Some tag-alongs use the /oo/ sounds but shift their spellings, the pests! These sound /oo/ like /food/:

grew few chew flew new threw

who whose shoe prove move do to tc

And these sound /oo/ like /foot/ in spite of their queer spellings:

wolf wool could would should

put pull push bush put full

aw au ow ou

aw...awful ow...owl
au...auto ou...out

Each of these bits can be turned into a useful word by adding either /aw/ or /ow/.
What can you make? Read aloud?

p-- dr-- gr--l c-- l--n sc--l

scr--l j-- d--n br--n th--

fr--n h-- cl-- h--k squ-- sh--l

--l n-- cr--n cr--d t--n cl--n

Each of these bits can be turned into a useful word by adding either /au/ or /ou/.
Read aloud. !

c--se --thor h--l --t cl--d s--r

r--nd sh--t h--se pr--d f--nd c--nt

--r l--d r--nd c--ch s--nd

Some pairs of these bits sound the same: it's just a bump in the spelling. Like this:
paws..pause flower..flour
--- Same sound, but different meanings! Another nuisance. But those who read a lot soon get used to which is which.

Will the hungry cat pause before she uses those

awful claws in her paws to catch a mouse?

We yawn at dawn when we hear that bird say "Caw!"

When the sun rises the lawn will thaw.

The broken dish is my fault because I dropped it.

Ouch! Say it louder! OUCH!

The king will frown if the clown picks up king's crown.

A drowsy owl scowls as he sleeps.

The crowd down town will growl if the parade is late.

Trouble: Some /ow/ words have gone astray and the /w/ acts as if it were a vowel to push the /o/ sound into /oe/. How can we tell which is which? Try both sounds for the /ow/ to see which one makes sense:

blow /bloe/ grow show yellow elbow throw

Some words tag along on the /aw/ sound but shift to an odd spelling. These troublesome words are no reason giving up on phonics, no! Far more than three quarters of all English words *can* be sounded out smoothly by using the phonics in How the Alphabet Works. And yes, knowing phonics does help with with spelling later.

ball tall small walk talk chalk water

/taul/ /tawk/ /wauter/

The Squirrel

Whisky, frisky, hippity hop,
Up he goes to the tree top!

Whirly, twirly, round and round,
Down he scampers to the ground.

Furly, curly what a tail!
Tall as a feather broad as a sail!

Where's his supper? In the shell,
Snappity, crackity, out it fell!

--Unknown

C and G

The letters C and G each represent two different sounds,-- depending on what letter comes next after C or G. If the next letter after the C is an E, an I, or a Y, the C will shift from a /k/ sound to an /s/ sound. Likc this:

cat center city cop cup cycle

cat or kitten keg of cider key to the cellar

choice grocery pencil cement voice ice

fence bounce price since space center

Two C's in one word, two different sounds: why?

bicycle circle accident success accept

Letter G can sound as in /goat/ or like /j/, depending on having an E, an I, or a Y next after it,-- except this doesn't always work with letter G! How can we tell which is which? Try both sounds and listen to see which one makes sense:

gas get,page give,magic got gum gym

gang gentle engine gossip gypsy

suggest judgement giraffe danger gyp

Spooks

Sometimes extra letters sneak in. Often they make no sound at all. Maybe they are hoping we won't notice them. Actually they are leftovers from how people used to talk, long, long ago. I wonder how these words did sound, long ago?

ghost gnome gnat sign guess guide

doubt thumb lamb comb dumb crumb

knock know knob knife knot knee

write wreck wrist wrong hour honest

build buy league bread head

young autumn column

And then there is poor old /gh/ who never seems to know what to do with himself. Long ago he used to be a kind of throaty noise, like clearing your throat, which we don't consider very polite. How would you rather spell these? Try out your ideas. (But not on a spelling test!) Notice that the spelling of every word gives at least some clue as to how it sounds.

laugh /laff/ light enough weigh eight

though through thought ought brought

Ben Jonson (1573-1637) wrote: "I cannot respect any man who is incapable of spelling a word in more than one way."

ti ci si

More advanced readers will come upon some words in which the digraphs /ti/ or /ci/ or /si/ will stand-in for an /sh/ sound. These are leftover spellings from words that have come to us from Latin or French ancestors.

permission objection correction action

facial attention occasion precious

recitation condition delicious patient

question suggestion special

multiplication addition subtraction division

Some odd-ball "word families":

old...cold...gold...told...scold...sold jolt...bolt

mind...find...kind wild...child...mild

most post host

Some words have switched their vowel sounds around without switching their spelling:

bear break great field yield brief

Reading for Laughing

Dr. Seuss: Bartholomew and the Oobleck

Barbara Robinson: The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

Lucretia Hale: The Peterkin Papers

M & M Petersham: The Rooster Crows

Thomas Rockwell: How to Eat Fried Worms

A.A.Milne: Winnie the Pooh

Gelett Burgess: Goops and How to Be Them

Jean Stafford: Elephi the Cat with the High IQ

Anne White: Junket

Morrell Gipson: Mr. Bear Squash-You-All-Flat

Bennett Cerf's: Book of Laughs

See also "Good Books for Good Readers" in How the Alphabet Works

Teaching Reading 101

Some assignments: (*or potential test questions for the college student!*)

1. Write a possible primer page of sentences for a student who has learned enough phonics to handle only three-letter sandwich words with short vowels.

2. Do another page adding two additional words: *a* and *the*.

3. Do the same adding a consonant to some three-letter sandwich words, like this: stop, spit, grub, etc. You can include here some words that end in doubled consonants, such as duck, spill, puff, doll, bell, (But not *ball; why not?)*
Caution: at this point do not use *er, ir, ur*. Those come later.

4. Now write some sentences using only short vowels but including the digraphs *th, sh, ch: that, such, shall, chum, hush, path*..

5. Next write a review page of sentences using everything so far but nothing that hasn't yet been taught.

6. Add to your primer sentences showing the use of the two internal vowels: p*ai*d, seed, t*ie*d, t*oa*d, h*oe*, d*ue*.

7. Add sentences illustrating the "magic final *e*" which affects the long vowel preceding it: wade, here, side, rope, mule. Here you can add short words which end with a long vowel sound: he, she, me, go so, try, my...

8. Write a page for practicing the long vowel rule about the doubled consonant: dinner, filling, backed...

9. Write some words to demonstrate that *er, ir, ur* all sound alike, and some to show that */ar/or/* stand for a different sound.

10. Write out a fable from Aesop respelling whatever words you need in their possible phonic form. (For this you may need aw, ow, oy and oo. You will not need gh, gn, kn, or even qu.)

11. Pop quizz: draw a fescue card and explain how to use it and why.

SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n .
p q r s t . v w x y/y z

a e i o u

ab eb ib ob ub
ac ec ic oc uc
ad ed id od ud

A E I O U

ba be bi bo bu
ca *ce* *ci* co cu
da de di do du

sh th ch wh ph qu -ng

er ir ur	ar or	ow ou	aw au	oo oo	oy oi	ti ci si

A Hornbook for the 20th Century

"I could sit down every night," she said, "and teach someone to read, right here at my kitchen table. Just show me what to do, and how to begin."

Here's a HOW, using basic phonics. This is the oldest method in the world for teaching reading. It has worked for more than 2,000 years, ever since the Phoenicians invented the alphabet.

Our ancestors did it at home, before their children went to school. Older children have taught younger children by this method, while "playing school". What it takes to start is paper and pencil. Our ancestors used a slate, remember?

How the Alphabet Works

To start, all you need is paper and pencil. Some ABC cards or Scrabble letters can be helpful but not necessary.

1. The learner may already know the sounds for some of the letters of the alphabet. If not, teach him the SOUNDS for the letters: sssss ffffff mmmm. Notice that, in most cases, each letter, if you name it out loud, will give some hint of its sound, except for H and W. Be careful not to add any grunts to the sounds of the letters. Sound it *bbbbb*, not "buh". Sound it *ttttt*, not "tuh". Those extra grunts get in the way later when you try to sound out a word.

Even children as young as four will enjoy naming and sounding out letters.

2. Five of the letters are Vowels: a e i o u. These are the hardest to learn, but they make a big difference. Each of them has two possible sounds: "long" and "short". The long vowel sounds just like the name of the letter. The difficult vowels are the short vowels. The short vowels sound like this: Sound them out loud--

a as in apple, bag, Andy
e as in egg, red, Edward
i as in igloo, wig, Indian
o as in ox, top, Otto
u as in umbrella, mud, Uncle

It may take a lot of practice to get these clearly. But it is worth while because these 5 short vowels are used in almost two-thirds of all our words.

ALL WORK IN THIS BOOK IS DONE OUT LOUD.
SILENT READING COMES LATER.

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3. The letters that are not vowels are called "consonants." Put one consonant with one of these short vowels. This makes a beginning sound for a word, like this:

na sa ra ba la re pe le te je mi ti si hi ri
jo ro co po lo hu ru bu tu ju
Then mix them up: ti fa le jo hu mi sa re di nu

Be sure to stay with the **short vowels** on this, as in:
bat, get, zip, hot, bum. man, red, tip, fox, sun
a e i o u **Sam fed his ox** bugs.
Encourage the learner to practice this until it comes easy.

All work in this program is reading out loud.

4. Next make some little sandwich words-- one consonant, then a vowel, then one more consonant. In the middle is a short vowel, ike this:

hat	mad	rag	ten	wet	jet	zip
dig	win	box	job	cut	hum	tub

Sound them out, out loud, letter-by-letter, left-to-right.
You and the learner can make dozens and hundreds of these little sandwich words. ABC cards are nice for this practicing. Paper and pencil are fine.

If you are working with an adult, everything explained so far can be done in half an hour. It will encourage the learner to go fast so that he can figure out dozens of these words right away.

It will be helpful to teach the learner two words: the, a.
Then you can read aloud some little sentences:
Ed got a job. Tom got on the bus. Gus fell in the mud.
Jim had a pet fox. Meg has a zip-up bag.
Get us a big box. A fat man had a nap on the bus.

Use a pointer, (called a FESCUE or straw) to sound out the letters one by one, from left-to-right. If the learner slips up on this and tries to read any words backward, cover the last letter with a card until he has sounded out the first consonant and the short vowel.

Sounding out the **letters** from Left to Right is very important. The learner who does not catch on to this will soon be trying to read "was" for "saw". Next thing you know, somebody will call him "dyslexic" or "learning disabled". There's nothing the matter with his brain. He was just trying to read backwards! So show him how to sound the letters from left-to-right. There is a difference between--

pan...nap but...tub top...pot spot...stop

It is not babyish to use a pointer. A pointer can be a big help. Even college students have discovered that a pointer can useful.

> *The goal is Automaticity. That means that sounding-out is so well learned that it is used without thinking. Whisper-reading usually comes before silent reading.*

5. After the learner has made and sounded out lots of these little sandwich words, try something fancy. Put an extra consonant into some of these simple words, like this: Sound them out loud.

snap drag lift drip grab stop grump strap

All these words and dozens more can be made with one short vowel in the middle of the sandwich. Here are some, but you and the learner can make some more yourselves. Sound each letter. USE A POINTER.

crab grip stuff bend trap brag yell strip flat
luck plant bell twin list drugs pack strict

Try some longer words-- sounding each letter:

dragon invent trumpet wagon difficult taxes banana
telegram octopus umbrella electric discuss
windmill connect pumpkin hundred bandit

6. Our alphabet does not have enough letters for English. Therefore we put two letters together to get the extra sounds we need. Like this:

sh as in shop, shell, shut, fish, cash
th as in thin, thick, with, this. bath
ch as in chop, chin, rich, much, lunch

Let the learner use some of his little sandwich words and turn them into other words by using **sh, ch, or th.** Read aloud:

ship that chop crash path wish

You can put some of these words together to make dumb sentences,-- which the beginner can sound out for himself.

Mitch stepped off the path and fell in a mud puddle.
The fish is in a pan in the kitchen, but it smells bad.
Will the bank cash this check that Tom has given us?
Did Ann smash that glass? Pick up the chips, Ann.
Ed got a job at the shop. Jim has a job with the bus.
Ellen has a big red bag that can zip shut.

7. So far we have used only the short vowels. The long vowels are easy: each one has the same sound as its name. To make a vowel say its name, we use another vowel to push it, like this:

paid, wait, aid, raise, claim, mail
feet, tree, see, heat, neat, freeze, team,
pie, tie, died, lies, cried, tried
coat, road, soap, oatmeal, loaf, Joe
due, sue, cue, juice, Tuesday, Sue

In some words the pusher vowel may be separated from the vowel it is pushing, like this:

late, game, save, base, date, Jane
fire, live, wife, pile, line, wide
joke, bone, more, hole
tune, June, cure, use, excuse

Some end vowels are long: go, me, she, so, no, we. Also: by,my.why. Make some more sentences using these patterns. ALWAYS READ ALOUD!

8. Often if two consonants get between the first vowel and that pusher vowel, the pushing doesn't push through. Like this:

late/later.....ladder. dine/diner.....dinner.
like/liked.....licked. slide/sliding....skidding

Let the learner figure out which of these words works which way, long vowel or short vowel, and tell why. Read aloud:

slope/slopped file/filing/filling supper/super holly/holy

Although this rule doesn't always work, it works well enough to be useful. Here the learner can figure out whether the first vowel is long or short, and can tell why:

liked licked dim dime backing baking scrap scrape

When in doubt, try both ways: which one makes sense? It takes a bit of flexibility to read English,-- but no guessing!. Use phonics!

9. By now the learner can begin to pick out many words that he can read from any page of a book or magazine. He might try reading some familiar things, or songs he knows. Read aloud. *Use a pointer.*

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Mary had a little lamb
Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went.
That lamb was sure to go.

God bless America, land that I love.
God bless America, my home, sweet home.

10. There are some other combinations of letters to make sounds that are not in the alphabet. Like this:

au or aw as in auto, awful, law, cause, haul, draw
ou or ow as in owl, ouch, cow, house, down, loud
oi or oy as in oil, boy, toy, spoil, join, enjoy

oo as in book, look, crook. Or else--
oo as in moon, food, spoon. Which sound makes sense?

ar as in car, jar, tar, far, artist, spark
or as in corn, north, horn, morning
er-ir-ur--- These all sound the same, as in
her--first--nurse ... jerk bird burn

Notice the sound of *ng* in *morning* or *drawing.*
Sometimes the letters *ti,si,ci* substitute for *sh* like this:
nation, permission, special.

You and the learner can find examples of these sounds in the newspaper, in magazines, in children's books, or on the backs of cereal boxes,-- and read the words OUT LOUD. Use a fescue-pointer.

11. What shall we do about all those Exceptions? Well, at first we'll just tell the beginner a word he can't sound out. At the same time we can show him the parts of the word he *can* sound out. You will find that those Exceptions bother the grownups far more than they bother the children: the children adjust to them. It takes a bit of flexibility to read English,-- but **no guessing.** Match the letters to the sounds enough to prove you're right. "Pony" is not "horse". no!

How much of English can be sounded out? Most of it,-- lots more than three-quarters of all the words in the dictionary. And all the words can be sounded out at least partly,-- if you know how the letters work.

12. Don't overlook the usefulness of re-reading the same thing again,-- two, three, four, five times. Re-reading is a powerful tool.

Does all this work? Yes. But it is Work. How long will it take? That, of course, depends on how much practice goes on. In a good first grade the children practise reading every day for the whole school year, learning to read. Some of the fastest ones will learn to read by Christmas. Some will take longer. But Lots of Practise helps!

<u>There are Three Stages in learning how to read</u>:--

Stage One: learning how the alphabet works, that is, decoding the ABC's into the spoken language. This little book is about Stage One.

Stage Two: oral practice until this decoding becomes automatic. During this stage the beginner learns to add expression and tone-of-voice by reading out loud and hearing himself. Some individuals need more time on stage two, some less. When he has had enough oral practice, the learner will go on the Stage Three on his own.

Stage Three: rapid silent reading for information and appreciation of literature. Stage Three follows naturally after sufficient practice on Stage Two. This oral practice may take as long as a year. Let your child read out loud to you,-- or to his teddy bear! The "look-say" or "whole language" method tries to start with Stage Three,-- to "gather meaning" before successful decoding,-- and that produces guessing and inaccuracy. The learner who does not master Stage One never really reaches Stage Three.

How about those Older Children, the ones who maybe can, maybe can't read? The best-of-all way to find out is to have the child read out loud to you.

(a) This can tell you far more about the child's progress than any test scores or report cards. Look over his shoulder, while he reads aloud: how's he doing? (Of course, for the child who can already read well, there is still great value in having a parent read to him,-- to enrich his experience with materials just a little beyond his reach on his own.)

(b) But, for the child who is just learning to read, reading aloud to a parent (or a big sister) is precious practice, offering the matchless values of one-to-one private tutoring. He will benefit by reading the same story over and over again for practice, until using the alphabet becomes automatic. Only then will silent reading become effective.

What shall we read? Why not start with the favorite books of pre-school days? Mother Goose. Fairy tales. Poetry. Our ancestors learned to read by using the Lord's Prayer,-- not to learn the prayer; they already knew that by heart. They recited it out loud and watched the letters do their work. They taught beginners to use a FESCUE (a straw, as in broomstraw) to point letter-by-letter, left-to-right. reading aloud. A bit of poetry or a familiar song can make a fine first reading lesson.

Learning to read is the beginning of all the rest of getting an education. Abraham Lincoln had about as much schooling as second grade,-- but he could read! ***And the most important person in anyone's schooling is the one who teaches him how to read.*** Don't quit!

This is a Fescue Card used for sounding-out in learning to read.

Slide the notch in the card to show the word, letter-by-letter, from left to right, so that the learner can sound it out.

The Fescue Card prevents reversals and guessing.